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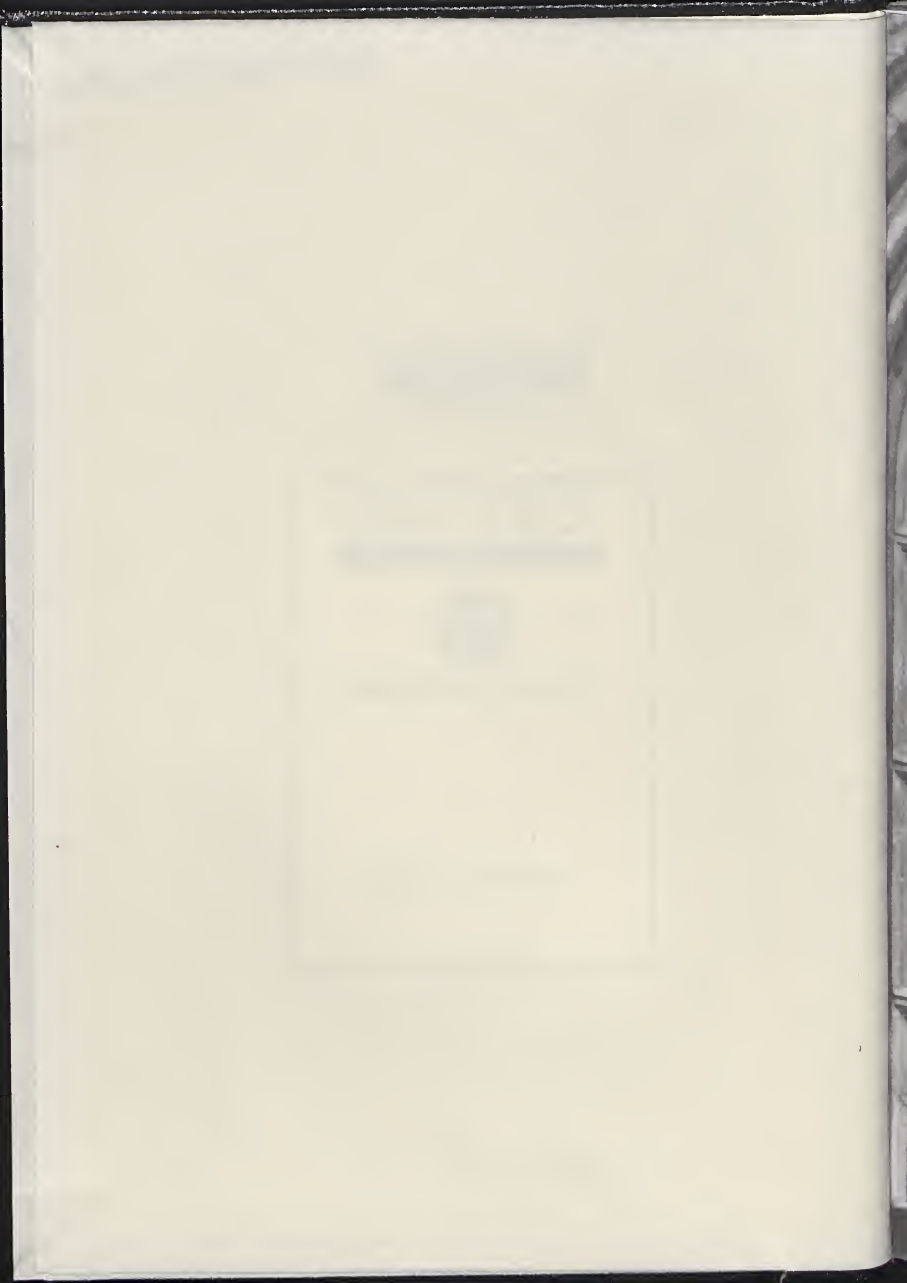
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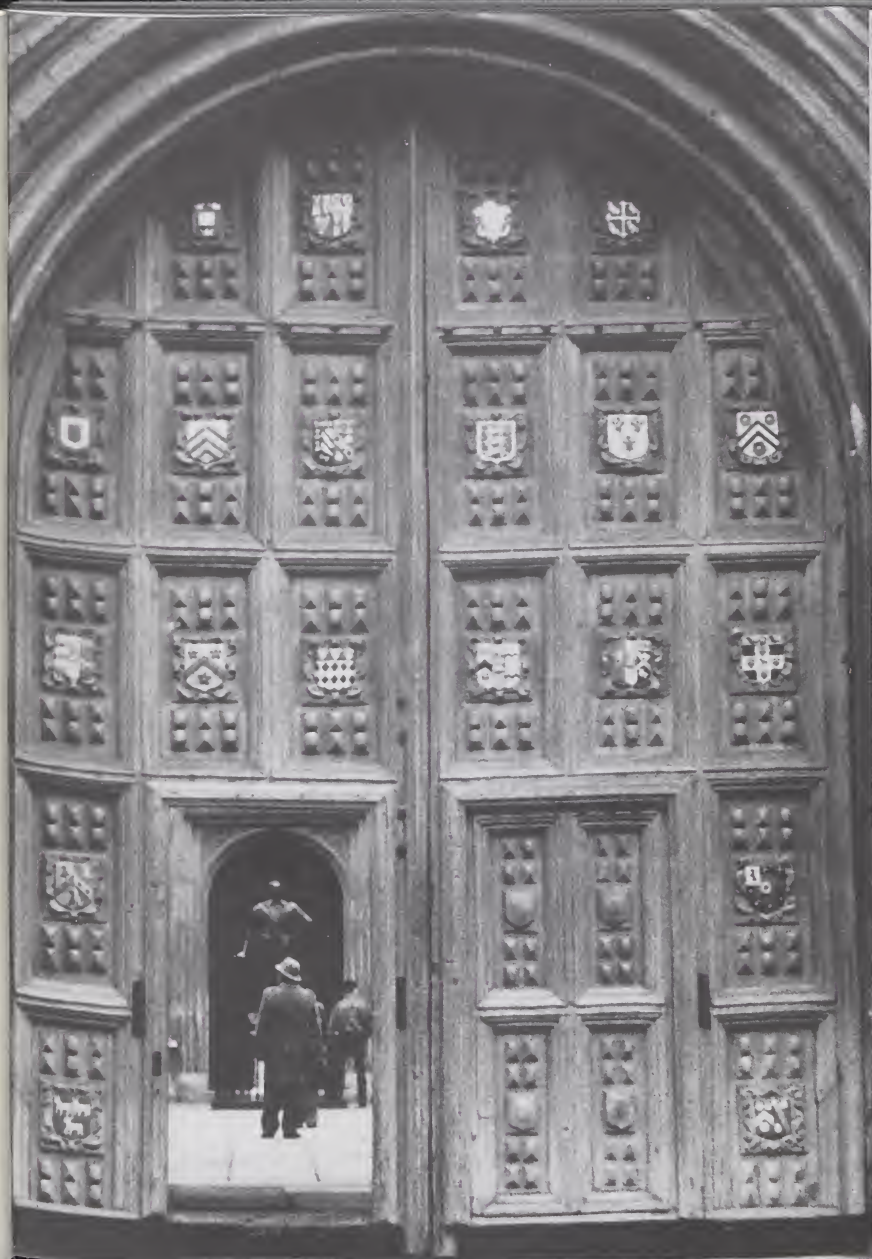


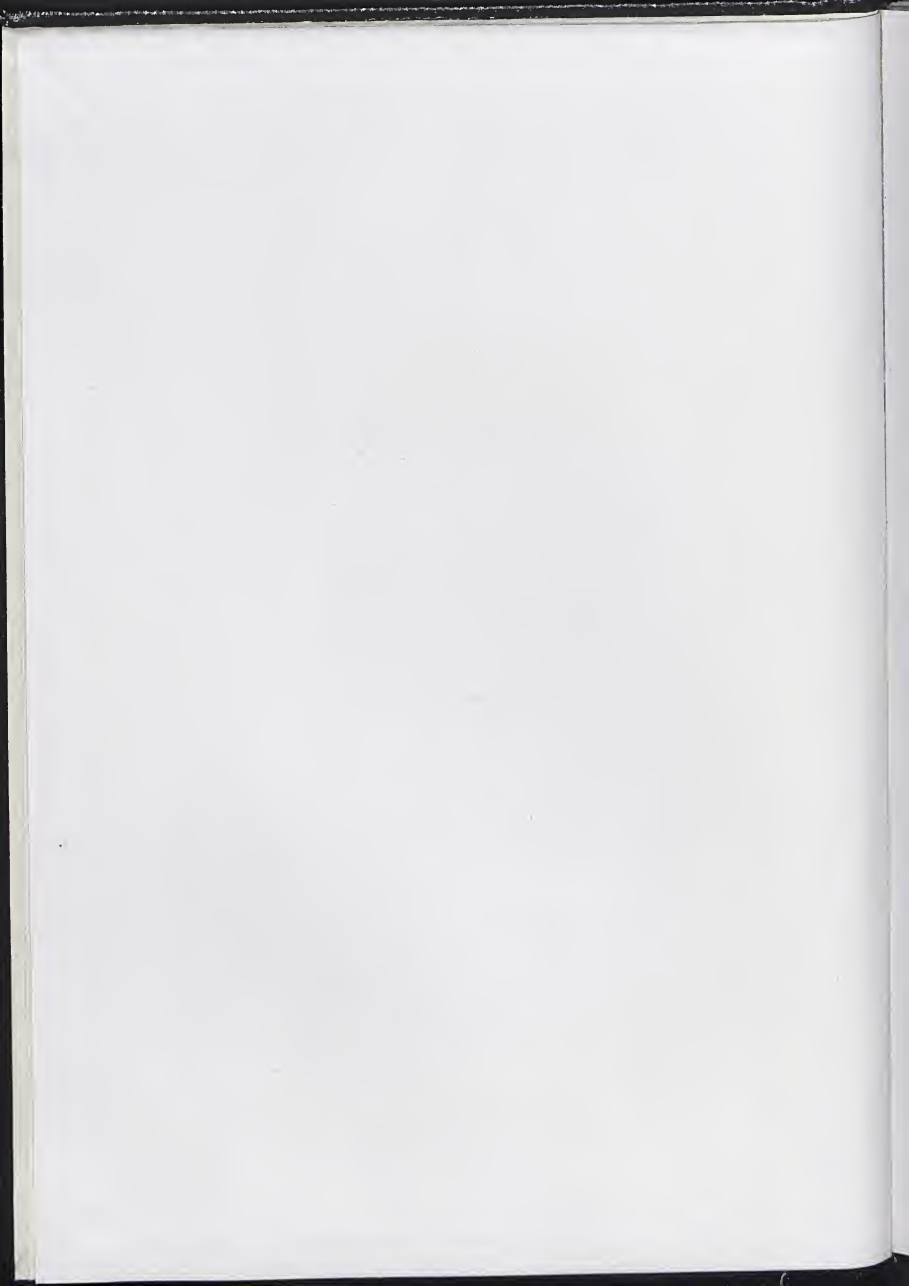
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# *The Student*

WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY  
WINSTON-SALEM, N.C.  
WINTER 1990



# The Student

WINTER 1990

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*The Student* is published two times per academic year by an elite group of Wake Forest University students who have a brand new penthouse office in Room 502 of the Benson Pleasuredome. It is a (very) non-profit organization existing of, by and for the Wake Forest community. Contributions may be submitted to our office suite or mailed to Box 7247 Reynolda Station, Winston-Salem, NC 27109. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the editors, and they especially don't reflect those of the administration. Our typeface for this particular issue is Palatino. *The Student* is printed by Goslen Printing Company, Winston-Salem. Cover photo by Carl King, whose work also appears quite often in those other Wake Forest publications.

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**DECLAN  
KIBERD:  
RADICAL  
CRITIC  
and  
IRISH  
SCHOLAR**

*In the fall of 1990, Wake Forest was honored to have Professor Declan Kiberd teaching a two-credit "Ideas in Literature" course in the English department. The course began with Oscar Wilde and covered many authors, including Synge, Yeats, Heaney, Friel and Shaw. Professor Kiberd's main emphasis was to stress these writers not as branches of English literature, but part of a rich tradition all their own, a post-colonial tradition. Kiberd is in his late thirties, has curly red hair and speaks with a beautiful, heavy Irish accent. He was recently named Chairman and Professor at University College, Galway. He taught for a year at the University of California at Santa Barbara. For several years, he had a weekly column in The Irish Times. He has written several books of literary criticism, among them The Male Feminist. The Student was lucky enough to get to talk to Professor Kiberd the day before he returned to Ireland to begin the semester there. We talked at length about many of his ideas on Ireland and Irish literature. The following is a record of the interview.*

**STUDENT:** I'd like to start off by asking you about one line in your article "Fasten Your Seat Belts for the Third World," in the Irish Times. You write, "The wolves at the door can wait while we dispose of the mongrel foxes within." I was particularly interested in that.

**DECLAN KIBERD:** The wolves at the door were of course the international financiers to whom the country owed so much money, as I said, more per capita than even the Brazilians or the Mexicans, partly because we were white and were given more money and were seen as a superior risk to those unfortunate peoples, but this plunged us even deeper into debt. The "mongrel foxes" was an in joke because there was a former Irish Prime Minister who referred to his enemies within the country as 'the mongrel foxes' and said that he would fight them off and he was, in fact, one of the ministers who had borrowed a great deal of the money when he was in power and then used it, in my opinion, not to enrich the society as a whole, but simply sections of the middle class from whom he did the

usual thing, he bought votes in return for some goodies. So that was a sort-of coded reference to this man which anyone who has lived in Ireland in the last ten years would have immediately got. That's one of the difficulties—opportunities and difficulties—of living in a relatively small society, that every line is freighted with about five thousand layers of meaning. That's why, sometimes, we are not the most analytic of thinkers, every darned word and sentence has about five different meanings to it. The idea of scientific accuracy is almost impossible under these circumstances.

That's what it was.

**STUDENT:** In the article, you also seem concerned that Ireland is becoming a third-world country.

**KIBERD:** No, I wouldn't say concerned, because I don't regard it as a negative and if you look to the end of the article, I make a

point that it was what we were in our early years as an independent state and what we may become again, that it would be no harm, because at that time, we had a vision of ourselves. We saw ourselves as non-aligned, neither capitalist nor communist, but, in a way, in a mediating role between the superpowers. The history of the last year has shown the wisdom of that position, actually, and I think a lot of the smaller countries which held to a non-aligned position may again become important as peacemakers through the U.N. and so on, as we were in our earlier decades and, indeed as we still are. So all I was really saying was, rather than 'We are becoming a third-world country,' this is a kind of smear that you hear politicians use against the government as a sign of how backward the place is, rather than see that as negative, to see that as a positive self-image of a society that had a vision, a sense of where it was coming from and where it was going to.

**STUDENT:** Wasn't there an incident just this past year where the Irish were being

looked to as a peacekeeping force?

**KIBERD:** Yes, well, the Irish army has been part of the U.N. peacekeeping force in the Middle East for quite a number of years and they're still there, and, indeed, many Irishmen have been shot dead doing the work. Back in the early sixties we were in the Congo, at the time of the trouble there when the Belgians were getting out and the stateship of Katanga was being created in the south and a number of Irish soldiers were killed keeping the peace there. In all these involvements, like, say, the Swedish

involvement in peacekeeping, or the Indian involvement, arise from the fact that the country was historically non-aligned and were seen therefore as a better arbiter than countries which either came under the Moscow or Washington umbrella.

**STUDENT:** Do you think Ireland's involvement around

the world is good, or do you think they need to concentrate on Ireland itself?

**KIBERD:** No, no, I think we should always connect out to the wider world not to be provincial, but the involvement should be based on a vision of what we are, and I would say in our case it would be things like peacekeeping as a non-aligned force for the U.N. It would also be cultivating trading and cultural contacts with post-colonial, rather than post-imperial peoples. To an extent, we do that. We've had a lot of trade, for instance, with the Arab world. In fact, our economy is in some difficulty right now because of the trade embargo on Iraq because one of the largest sources of revenue to the Irish economy is beef exports to Iraq and these have all been frozen. So there's a lot of cheap meat on sale in Ireland this week, but there are also a lot of very poor farmers and meat-curiers, and so on.

We've always had a historic involvement to our immigrants. I mean, forty million Americans came from Irish descent, there's only five million Irish on the island.



That meant that there was a lot of letters, news, travelling back and forth. England and Ireland are very aware of American politics, who the up-and-coming names are, who might be a candidate in '92. They take a critical interest in all this, but, equally, a lot of them have relations in what is called the Third World, in Latin America, Africa, Southeast Asia, frequently working as missionaries, priests and nuns, and for that reason, because of forced immigration, because of a kind-of missionary involvement which had no political element

to it, the Irish have actually been very active internationally given the relatively small size of the community. I think it's a good thing because I think we need to promote these understandings and liaisons with other post-colonial peoples. Most of our neighbors in the European community, the EEC, are

post-imperial, people like the Dutch, the British, the French, Spanish, and so on. We're not. We have to keep remembering that internal difference and honoring it in our relations with the wider world.

**STUDENT:** How does what we've been talking about relate to what you see as the current mission of contemporary Irish literature?

**KIBERD:** I think that they relate very easily. What it would mean is that literature, from Wilde and Shaw through Yeats, Synge, O'Casey down to Beckett is studied under courses which are called post-colonial or post-imperial literature, rather than English Literature. The mistake up 'til now has been to study people like Yeats as sort of exotic offshoots of the canon of English Lit. Or to study Shaw and Wilde with no reference to their Irish origin. Most American students that I meet here don't know that Wilde and Shaw were Irish. All of this has produced distorted readings of these writers because they are always read against the norm that is assumed to be the English personality, the English mind, the

English canon, and they can only appear deviant, or aberrant, or weird. But if you study them alongside writers from post-colonial places, the West-Indies, Latin America, India, it becomes clear, what the overlaps between these writers are in terms of theme, treatment, in fact, they're almost formulaic. What they show you is that colonialism, wherever it went, whether the climate was hot or cold, did the same basic things to the people, and in that context, it is England that appears weird, aberrant, a bit different and all these other

peoples who have things in common. And yet, such is the prestige of English culture in America, too, I think, people define themselves against it.

Public television and public radio play a lot of English programs under the idea that this is, in some way, more cultured, and this is why it needs more

money to pay for it, and so-on. This is seen, in some way, as a cultural ideal against which the rest of us poor underlings must measure ourselves, and even though people give their money, maybe they need a little bit of this culture. I think this is an incredibly self-loathing analysis of English culture. In fact, I've often thought that the canon of English literature is a course in self-loathing, whether it's administered to Irish people in Dublin, to Americans in New York or Seattle, or to Indians in Bombay; that it gives them a very distorted perspective in which to view their own cultural reality. I mean, I think, in a way, the whole challenge to the canon is about breaking those molds.

So, I would see Ireland's as not necessarily a third-world literature, in fact, it is more complicated than that. It lies between the two, between First and Third. Partly First World in its climate, buildings, basic cultural traditions as part of Europe, but very much Third World in the ways I've been indicating. I think the fact that it is ambiguous adds to the richness of the lit-

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**In fact, I've often thought that the canon of English literature is a course in self-loathing, whether it's administered to Irish people in Dublin, to Americans in New York or Seattle, or to Indians in Bombay...**

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erature. Borges, the Argentinian writer, said that the Argentines were like the Irish because they were in some ways an evolution of Europe; they from the Spanish literature, we from English. But because they were at a distance from it, they could use its methods without being enslaved to them, they could use them without superstition in a critical and even daring, experimental way. I would think that if you wanted an analogy for Ireland, it would be a semi-developed third-world country like Argentina, which has a good education system, semi-developed economy, but very much post-colonial in its political and cultural traditions.

**STUDENT:** You're mostly a scholar and critic of Irish literature. What do you see as your personal means of recovering Irish literature?

**KIBERD:** Yes, well, I would regard myself as a radical critic

who is confronted with a critical tradition at home which is basically bourgeois and nationalist. I would like to see myself as someone in sympathy with Third World readings of literature, who is trying to promote that way of looking at our culture. Lately, it's okay for me to walk in and say these things I've said in your course, but at home there is massive resistance to it. My students don't like the idea, they don't mind studying Rushdie, but they don't like studying him alongside an Irish writer, with the implication that India and Ireland are somehow compatible and comparable. So, there is a sort of mission to break down the resistance of a basically middle-class student body.

**STUDENT:** You mean because they don't view Ireland the same way you do?

**KIBERD:** They don't see us as post-colonial at all. They see us as part of the successful consumer democracies of Western Europe and they have internalized all those attitudes. In a way, when they emigrate after graduation, they make a decision, consciously, to remain members of the in-

ternational bourgeoisie by seeking a consumer lifestyle elsewhere, rather than staying at home and fighting at perhaps a lower income in a job that might be interesting but frustrating and badly paid. So there is a sort of challenge facing every student, not just teachers, in a country like that where the identity is still up for grabs or being debated.

My view of the academic in that sort of community is very different from the life of an academic here at Wake Forest in the sense that I write articles on a regular basis

in mainstream national newspapers, which, in a popular form, are the arguments I'm putting in more detail in the classroom. I don't see the university as some privileged zone corralled off from society where people can have a very high-minded exchange independent of the society outside. I would

very much regard my work as a teacher of students as being of a piece with journalistic activity in the papers and it seems to me that in America, academics have a more rarefied lifestyle. Even the very physical contours of the campus which is a sort of beautiful island in the midst of Winston-Salem indicate how difficult it would be, even for an academic who wanted to, to break through to the wider community. We don't have that problem, we have the reverse problem; it's almost wanting to bar your door to get two free days to write an article and work out a few ideas, but there's a constant pressure from the world of politics, the political crisis in the north of Ireland on intellectuals to make statements, get involved.

**STUDENT:** In America, we've got a lot of literature being written, and then there's also popular literature like Stephen King novels. Is there any comparison in Ireland? Are people like Seamus Heaney and Brian Friel considered popular literature?

**KIBERD:** Yes, the distinction between high-brow and low-brow would not be

anything like as extreme in our culture. We do have airport novels, and we do read them in airplanes, but people who read read at what would be regarded as a fairly high level kind of writing. Let me give you an example: Heaney is not a simple poet, and yet he's an extraordinarily popular one. He gives a poetry reading in Dublin, in a big cinema with a seating of a thousand, there would be people queuing around the corner, turned away, disappointed. As I understand it, a poetry reading in America is doing pretty well if

it gets fifty or a hundred in attendance. I'm not saying Heaney is typical, even in Ireland he's a mega-star, as he is over here, but I think there is more excitement over writers than there is over her, not so much as celebrities, but as gurus, as people who have a wisdom to impart to the community that is suffering an identification problem and there's a terrible pressure on writers as a result.

The problems the politicians with all their guile can't solve, are given to Seamus Heaney, and he is asked to make some interesting clarifying statement about Northern Ireland or whatever. It means that among the wider community, there's a real curiosity about these writers, even people who don't read them in a sophisticated way, like you would in a seminar or something, are aware of what they think, and what they've said and what other people think about what they've said and, again, they're not as removed from the rest of the community and so they are almost compelled to give readings in school halls which are attended by people who would not regard themselves as poetry lovers but who can get caught up in the excitement of that moment.

**STUDENT:** It sounds like Pablo Neruda who fills soccer stadiums with his readings.

**KIBERD:** Well, I don't think Heaney could

fill soccer stadiums, but, yes, you're right. Again, there's that connection with Latin American culture. I think the distinction between high- and low-brow is actually a pernicious one that has done a lot of damage to Anglo-American culture, let us say. It is a class system of the mind and it has not just produced a shoddy kind of commercial writing which we all know only too well, but it has also produced academics who frequently use such arcane jargon among themselves that even the intelligent lay person is excluded from discussion. I feel this particularly about forms that radical criticism has taken in America. It would be another distinction I would make. Radical criticism in Ireland and in Europe is still comprehensible to the lay reader.

I can write what I think about Ireland in the newspaper and be read by

thousands, but really brilliant people here, you know, superbly gifted minds, seem to be corralled into tiny graduate programs where they talk to one another and have a few privileged graduate students eavesdropping, taking notes, and that's the end of it. It is a way, in fact, of deflecting and disarming some very powerful minds in this culture. Pay them a lot of money, give them a good chair of critical studies, and then hear no more from them. Put them in an intellectual ghetto where they torture one or two people of like minds and it's well worth the money. I think that tradition of concentrations of brilliant scholars in graduate schools where they simply write articles and address other people with equal qualifications is a great impoverishment of the wider community and I think now it is producing a criticism which, as I say, even smart, educated lay people cannot get involved with. What I admired most about American culture as a younger lad was writers like Edmund Wilson who are not academics, but who wrote articles that an academic would send his or her



students to read, and it would explain really difficult writers like Joyce and Proust in a really clear way. Edmund Wilson was, you know, basically a lay intellectual who wrote for the papers and magazines, but what he wrote was at least as interesting and complex as anything coming from the academy. That tradition seems to be lost now in American culture and you simply have a hyper-academization of the mind, as I say, in these graduate centers.

**STUDENT:** That's certainly true here, that undergraduates don't feel encouraged to go on to graduate schools unless they feel a part of that inner circle...

**KIBERD:** I think also, it's true around the country that where there are those strong graduate schools around the country, the undergraduates who are at those schools feel very neglected, and you are probably much better off at Wake Forest than you would be at certain places which have these high caliber graduate programs because the minds of your teachers are focused on you here not on some battle of the intellectual giants occurring elsewhere in the corridor. But again, it's all a bit of a tragedy that graduate and undergraduate studies don't get blended any more than they do on the same campus.

**STUDENT:** Undergraduate students here can't even take graduate courses...

**KIBERD:** But you need in a way to have more graduate students around here because post-graduate students in a community have a great effect on undergrads. They probably teach them more than accredited teachers do. I certainly found that in the universities I attended as a student and I think Wake is a wonderful campus in the sense of being really focused about the teaching activity at a time when a lot of universities have become disgracefully research-orientated and have abandoned their students. There's great credit due for that, and if it could develop its graduate program I think it would be even richer as a place to be a student.

**STUDENT:** We definitely have a focus on the teaching, but it seems like outside the classroom and outside office hours, there's not much of a sense of community. You won't see your professors the same places you might go at night, you just don't generally see them.

**KIBERD:** That's true, but maybe it's got something to do with the geography of the campus. I never could find a focal point, where I might meet students, except if I was eating a pizza at Pizza Hut where I did meet several students from my class. I met maybe half my class in the end by just sitting there eating pizzas. But it struck me that if you had a pub, speak of the damned in North Carolina, but if you did, it would be a wonderfully centrifugal kind of force to bring the whole academic community together, perhaps only in stupor, but at least bring them together. It seem to me the layout of the campus is so de-centered, to use a trendy buzzword, that, in fact, there is no way for people to congregate in that fashion.

**STUDENT:** They did try that last year, but the pub wasn't in a good location and didn't have a pub feel to it at all. It was in the formal dining room, and on week-end nights they let people come in to drink and eat. It didn't work out very well. I guess that's most everything... Are you working on anything right now?

**KIBERD:** Well, I am writing a book for Harvard University Press about the theory of Ireland as, in some ways, a post-colonial, third-world type culture which will study it against the backdrop of Latin American, African, and Indian writing. I hope to have it finished by next June perhaps. That's something I've been working on for about five years. It began as journalistic articles but has become a much more academic application of these arguments. I'm really at the end stage now of writing it up...

**STUDENT:** Well, congratulations!

**KIBERD:** I hope I do it, I still haven't done it!

## SPOONS

She has folded these into the oak drawer  
16000 times now - opened this trailer of bones and,  
like the night-shift nurse at the Methodist home,  
carefully tucked them in.  
Their caved in faces reflect the Depression and  
how long the bent swan necks underwent scrubbing  
to survive. They are her bitter taste,  
have seen her wear thin in her dresses.  
Their questioning gaze arches into her eyes,  
a shine on the clean counter in the kitchen late at night.  
She is in charge  
of cleaning them - of drawing up that cloth.  
She tries to read them.  
She is straining to hear them speak, the dead faces,  
as if they were auguries, or sacred words.

## JESUS

Jesus is that woman  
with wide hips standing in the doorway  
she has fallen  
she is your mother.

The vine branches back  
centuries in her blood  
linking you to all those women.

God's chosen ones are planted  
in his vineyard,  
behind a high wall  
they are peeling potatoes  
and making salad  
they are standing over a sink like  
they have done for years.

Their feet are small  
and spread wide and flat as a plain.  
Their noses are flat  
or like towers and their eyes see  
no farther than their knees.

On the other side of the wall  
are all the men  
they stand uneasy birds  
packed to the eyes with seed,  
waiting for the wind to change.

**MY RECOLLECTIONS OF THE LECTURE I  
WAS GIVEN AFTER STEALING MY COUSIN  
EUNICE'S NEW BRACELET.**

I  
took you too  
fast.

snatched you out  
of hand and ran.

I was like a child  
with a stolen piece  
of candy-

quickly  
I cast the wrappper off

(I remember your jacket  
crumpling to the floor-  
like my mother fainting)

popped  
you into  
my mouth  
a greedy little eater.

But the sweet caught  
in my throat like holy words

and burst.

Now I pick up the floor  
looking for crumbs they said would  
be under the master's table

but for me there are none

only empty tongues  
speaking of the sea.

## A PEAR TREE GREW IN QUEENS

Flushing Meadows World's Fair,  
Pop-poo brought a great cheese there.  
Six-hundred pounds and cheaply sold—  
Man of business, brash and bold,  
With five sons young and old;  
Carried it down to the basement—  
. . . . and it was sold.

Took the money and hid it there,  
With depression fear- poverty's scare,  
Behind old walls and broken chair,  
In this musty Greek's treasured lair—  
Sad:  
My Grandfather's life unfolds there.

## THE POETS' ADVICE

Jules Laforgue said to me:

"Split leather in a Studebaker  
Beats a brand-new Jag with a popcorn maker;  
A crowded backseat at the late-night show  
Does a body more good than sniffing California snow  
I should know"

John Donne tells me:

"A greasy booth at Burger Heaven  
Beats a night at Jean-Louis with a guy named Kevin;  
A chili dog for two is a far better sight  
Than swapping furtive glances across a tablecloth all night  
Got a light?"

Andrew Marvell quipped:

"Sinatra on the Gramophone  
Beats this awful modern music when a couple's all alone;  
A bit of caviar round a decorated pool  
Can't match a brown bag lunch on a parkbench after school  
Thou art a fool"

Paul Verlaine added:

"Huddled secrets shared at a football game  
Outstrip the empty lies you shared at night with what's-his-name;  
And the safest sex can't match the bliss  
Of a sidewalk coffee stand and a rainy kiss."



## THYRSIS

to T.B.

...God

I wish he was still here;  
we could lie in the grass and talk about Beckett:  
tend the flocks of our minds;  
instead I walk in the face of the Autumn chill  
trudging the overgrown green of this golf course hell.

Angels of the sun  
can't even shine through the dim daylight  
of a windowless summer, so everyone is blind.  
But at the center of this student  
lies the son of a son of a dark truth.

Flowers assault me with their brilliance:  
a beautification program for a corpse.  
There are bodies everywhere on this still field  
like tolerance, like knowledge, and justice;  
all of them festering,  
on a gorgeous springtime afternoon.

And now I have a professional future to suffer through  
no deacon to guide me, no teacher to teach me,  
I stand on a frozen sandtrap, club in hand;

he is dead  
dead snow descending,  
a suicide,  
and alone am I...



## ONE SUMMER

While I was still  
going through my fascination  
with parts  
and pieces, dividing  
my sleep like drips  
from a loose-mouthed eve  
on the roof, there was a day  
I know I learned that people  
could give birth in pools  
and I asked my questions then—

this was the same summer  
we had to save rain  
in buckets  
and then a hailstorm  
flooded our basement—  
a summer of extremes, a pendulum  
set to swing, and the weeks  
scattered like azalea petals—  
so much confetti after the storm.

It was the first summer  
with answers- it filled with words  
like 'gestation.'  
My freinds and I all got a new perspective  
on our breakfast eggs,  
and a feel for rhythms  
deep inside. You could say  
we were learning the tides, scholars  
of the ebb  
and the red, red flood.

Late August, I remember we sat  
on the porch together,  
my mom and I-  
a cicada in the bushes  
droning "I am," "I am,"  
the creek out back, trickling  
and feeding.  
She was rocking beside me,  
her eyes just closed,  
my hand almost touching hers.

## IT HAS ROUGH HANDS

Let it run its coarse fingers  
through your hair, strike  
your face, carry  
your best belongings  
into the mud beside the house.  
It'll marry you to its lonely finger,  
keep you in a shoebox  
among the shredded newspapers,  
the old yellow socks.

If it wants, let it scream and  
bite the air, let it  
babble and wither, walk  
with a false limp and crawl  
into your lap,  
a sick pigeon  
holding its breath.

Then stroke it, this flesh  
and fire curse in your  
arms. Find it a black bone  
and watch it scramble.  
Suddenly it's tame, it stumbles  
toward you - dirt, bark, broken feathers  
on its grinning chin,  
one hand behind its back.

## SAN FRANCISCO, 1990

Fish-fellows dead for sure,  
But Allen, what are you?  
A bar, and Kerouac a street

You drank them under their flat world,  
So they raised the legal age,  
And still drove under its influence.

Dead stoned, they laughed you off,  
And on your simple avenue of words  
Re-routed I-15,  
Turned your page,  
And opened an interstate  
Of vowels and punctuation:

Two lanes this way  
Of word cars brave enough to pool  
But not brave enough to walk,

And two lanes that way  
Of buses and motorcades  
Stalled On carphones to call  
Your traffic the problem.  
They've had a hard trip.

Your way is here, somewhere;  
I don't think it's paved.

## LOCAL HERO

From the time our hands  
and wrists locked on this boat,  
over the grunts of the motor,  
I knew the lake would suck  
you down, torso and arms  
and head following the rest  
in a slide off the bow.

You are a precious fish;  
from the wheel the journey  
is only a cascade of skidding,  
bumping, between the metal hulls,  
the fisher behind me  
reeling in the catch.

I see the colors through the water  
left by the splash, and think  
how the shining oil trails out,  
mixed and split by the blades.

And I wonder how it will feel,  
seconds later, engine off,  
as I float on the surface,  
reaching below to find  
the warmth my feet will tread in.

## WATCHING THE SHUTTLE AT CAPE CANAVERAL

Sidewalks reach across this swamp,  
my swamp- not cement slabs,  
hard as plates, but something more  
ephemeral here, wood, just  
wood, brown and green where  
the fungus streaks it.  
It looks like marble.

The ramp is dragged down  
at the end, meeting sand  
on its splintering edge.  
Piled against the dunes,  
which open for the boardwalk  
as if for a lover, weeds  
are stacked carefully,  
artfully, extended tendrils  
of the high tide.

Near the shore, sometimes,  
jellyfish will float,  
glowing and cautious;  
I stay, always, too long,  
watching them leave,  
tiny lights on the water,  
and hope to hold one  
in my hands.

## LOVE SONG IN NAHUATL

A serpent of sweet smoke, and they come for her.  
Calm in soft cotton, headdress of quetza feathers,  
Earspools of jade, and there she sits, framed  
By murals and flags:  
The new plaster leaps  
Like a jaguar  
Or a priest.

Heady clouds rise from each  
Incense burner— the onyx hot in the breasts  
Of Chalchiuhtlicue,  
And so the mystical fumes atop  
The pyramid to Chipaetotec  
Become the breath  
Of volcano.

She is supine upon the altar: silent  
But trembling. The skin  
On the back of a toad creeps like dreams.  
Mirrors glint wildly,  
Bodies hiss like sandstorms  
From below, the obsidian knives  
Are drawn, the sacrificial dish  
Prepared.

\* \* \* \* \*

Here in the airport the cigarette burns  
And once again I wish  
You would tear out my flexing heart,  
Wear my skin until it's golden and rank,  
Dance in the arrhythmia of copper bells,  
Clack my femurs above your head  
And eat of my steaming flesh.

## FACE MECCA

for father

Rucksack  
M-16 (well oiled)  
Bayonet  
Combat knife and holster  
Gas mask  
Canvas boots  
Helmet  
C-rats  
Coppertone.

His skin is sand  
His breath a camel's  
And all the land slithers  
In the wind.

\* \* \* \* \*

The gun turrets sweat  
And boil away in the sun.

The leviathan tips and creaks  
Swallowing  
Thick swells.

On deck  
A black roach creeps  
Like a woman  
Wrapped in shadow  
From head to toe.

\* \* \* \* \*

Like divining rods  
Bent toward cool Maine waters  
Or Mosaic staves  
With the character of serpents  
Hissing in Farsi,  
These poles fit  
Into cups in the back of the boat.

He pulls up to the dock pump.  
After filling,  
The gas hose drips  
Glowing beads into green water.

Their churning sleekness  
Catches the morning sun  
Like an explosion  
Of poison gas.



## THROUGH SPIRITS

As if there were a great fish  
caught  
in the throat  
or a bison  
standing in the hand  
I come

When the tortoise  
crackles as fire  
When an ivory tusk  
pierces a naked lamb  
When the horned toad  
leaps into an open ear  
and simmers  
like a black dream  
I come

After the light  
crashes  
in ash  
Before solstice  
During the blood  
I come

When the moon  
creases  
like aging skin  
and all of the soil hums  
and moans  
Beyond the bones  
of dead babies and dead mothers and dead fathers  
Below the mind's eye  
I come

This is my language  
Listen

## GREEN

Careful hands etch lazy-day  
memories across my back

raising skin  
raising questions

Like a spider they make me  
tingle and contract  
within myself

without myself  
and yet they are harmless

as the mountain stream  
that licks my feet

Peacefully I watch as the  
turkey vulture soars away  
with my chains  
in his  
grasp

delivering to me a  
five-fingered freedom

even without fear, they build  
a very strong nest

Suspended now by a granite  
hand,

I wait

A voice rises from its blanket,  
floats heavenward  
on a warm current,

makes my eyelashes flutter,  
dances in curls, and

leaves again on a baby's  
breath.

Somewhere below  
in the depths of the forest  
await a gentle-faced  
future  
shrouded in a  
flowing cloak of  
green

"You have to want to be pierced by God."

I pondered that statement for a moment as I stared at the young woman who sat across from me. I noticed that her husband was staring at me as I stared at her, so I turned to my own wife.

"Did you understand that?" I asked.

"I'm not sure," she replied. "I remember a Sunday school teacher telling me once that God knocked on the doors of all our hearts, but he wouldn't come in unless we opened the door. Is that the sort of thing you're talking about, Sharon?"

"In a way," she answered. "You have to open yourself to the shaft of God's love."

I was starting to be genuinely sorry that Kelly, my wife, had talked me into inviting the junior religion professor and his young bride over for drinks. I hadn't expected the conversation to take precisely this turn.

"You make theology sound like something downright sexual," I commented as I got up to fix another drink. I didn't miss the glance Kelly shot me.

"Oh, but that's exactly what it is. Most people have such an incomplete understanding of God. They see him as the Father, or even as the Mother, but there's so much more to him than that. God is my lover." She said that last with an expression on her face of the sort that I associated with my undergraduate days, when the slogan "Better Living Through Chemicals" was the closest thing to a theology that most colleges had.

"How do you feel about that, Jim?" I asked her husband.

He smiled. "Thinking of God as a rival would be pretty intimidating, don't you think? Thankfully, I've found it impossible to be jealous so far."

"You're a better man than I am," I muttered.

"Surely I haven't shocked you? You have the reputation of being one of the most liberal professors on campus," Sharon said.

"Like most reputations, mine is grossly unearned," I told her.

"Well, what's your personal theology?" she asked.

I sat back down. "That would take a long time to get into," I said.

Jim took the hint. He stood up, reaching for Sharon's arm. "It is getting awfully late. We'd better be going. Thanks a lot for having us over."

"Think nothing of it," my wife was saying. "The company was wonderful."

After we had said our goodbyes and Kelly had shut the door, she turned to me with a cold expression on her face.

"What?" I asked. I had had too much to drink; tomorrow's headache was already looking around for a comfortable place to settle in.

"You were rude," she said. That was one of Kelly's strong points. She always said what was on her mind, given the slightest opportunity. "You were rude to Sharon and you were rude to Jim. You didn't give much of an impression of respecting her opinions, and you were positively baiting him."

"I hardly think that's fair," I replied. "Under the circumstances, I thought that I showed superhuman powers of endurance. Did you *listen* to the things that she was saying?"

"Yes, I listened. I almost feel like you're jealous. Are you jealous, Bill? Jealous of her intensity? Is your faith that weak these days?"

"I would hesitate to say that wanting to spread your legs for Jesus constitutes a strong faith."

At that, she turned and left the room.

## MIRIAM

Before stepping through the doorframe, Miriam smudged the caked make-up from the wrinkles in the corners of her mouth.

"Yoo-hoo! Anybody home? Hell-oooo!"

"Can I help you?" a voice echoed from the next room.

Down the dark hall came a young man, hair bouncing with his stride, determined to maneuver around the boxes stacked precariously against the walls and make it to the front door.

"I certainly hope I didn't...disturb you, dear."

"No...no...just trying to unpack some things."

Miriam remained in the doorframe, balancing in one hand a poundcake wrapped tightly in aluminum foil. He didn't introduce himself.

"I'm, well, I'm your neighbor. Sort of. I live directly across the courtyard. Those would be my lavender curtains there." The man did not turn to follow her finger pointed towards the window at his back. "I made you this pound cake. I was told you were going to live here all by your lonesome. I figured I'd bring you something sweet to tide you over until you got settled. I live alone too."

"I won't be lonesome. Thank you for the poundcake."

A pause. Miriam busied herself studying the man's face. Strand upon strand of thin, brown hair lulled about his head in a lazy, haphazard way. His forehead protruded in competition with a Roman nose. Two small, dark eyes hid in the crevice between both features. He pressed his lips together so tightly that when he did speak they were unnaturally red.

With an agitated sigh, he moved forward to remove the gift from Miriam's upturned palm. Startled from her observations, she dropped it. He bent to retrieve it from the floor.

"Thank you again...Ms..."

"Miriam West. And you are?"

"Robert Loftus."

"Nice to meet you, Robert."

"You'll have to excuse me, Ms. West..."

"Miriam."

"You'll have to excuse me, Miriam. I have an appointment at three."

"Of course. Of course. Well, if you need anything, I'm right across the way. I'm the one with the lavender curtains."

"Yes. Thank you."

Miriam backed out of the doorframe.

Disgusted, Miriam slouched in her recliner. She had tried, dammit. She had tried to meet him and he had been rude—simply rude! It was Sarah's fault. Who cares how old he is, she had said. He's a man, you're a woman. Older women date younger men all the time. Take him something to eat. That should work. An attractive, young man who hadn't even turned to admire the curtains she had made. Who probably wouldn't eat the poundcake. Who could go to hell.

Sarah had gone to visit her sister for the week. She had made Miriam the welcoming committee. Now Miriam couldn't even call and complain about this individual.

Miriam tickled the bottom of her foot with the shag carpeting. She had even vacuumed. And cleaned the kitchen. And changed the sheets on her bed. He could have come over and at least looked to see how she had arranged her apartment. He would have seen what a clean house she kept. He would have stayed for a drink and they would



have discussed their lives until late in the evening. But the creep had all but pushed her out the door and had probably dumped the poundcake, unopened, into an empty box.

Miriam leaned forward and rummaged through the candy dish she had filled and had placed in the middle of the coffee table. Her fingers selected a green sour ball. And as the clock ticked off three o'clock on the opposite wall, she paused to see Robert Loftus still moving about the room, rearranging boxes. She shoved the candy into her mouth and sucked hard. Not only had he dismissed her but he had lied! Miriam broke the candy between her teeth and ground the pieces into her molars. A nice young man. Damn him.

Miriam stretched the cotton nightgown over her knees and tucked the hem beneath her toes. Ed McMahon was guffawing as usual and if anything else had been on, she would have thankfully changed the channel. As she became increasingly annoyed with the program, she wandered to the window to check on Robert Loftus. She hoped he was as bored as she was.

Large white curtains floated in the breeze of his window, unhampered by a screen. The light was dim behind them yet she could see people moving gracefully about in the shadows. A cocktail party. A young woman with hair pulled tightly back in a chignon edged herself onto the windowsill. How completely stupid, thought Miriam. If she edges herself out any further, she'll splatter on the concrete below. The breeze blew the curtains wide so Miriam could see the dozen or so people in the room. And the backless cocktail dress of the woman with the chignon. Absentmindedly, Miriam tugged at the short ridge of curls that cupped the back of her head. Fumbling for the cord to the lavender curtains, she waited for Robert to cross the room. After several minutes, she could not see him and pulled the curtain, making sure the two sides overlapped.

Miriam awoke the next day to the whine of a trumpet. Robert Loftus stood behind the now motionless white curtains, his chin ducked toward his chest, depressing valves in silence, then playing, pausing, checking valves again, playing. He would stop, swear, pace about the room and return to the same place in front of the window and play again. Damn him! Play the whole thing!

Miriam rose from the breakfast table, grabbed her keys, and slammed the front door behind her. Mr. Loftus had managed to ruin yesterday for her but he was not going to ruin today. Besides, without Sarah around, who else was going to tell him not to practice this early on a Saturday morning? By god, he was going to get a piece of her mind.

Knockknockknockknockknockknockknock.

The brass instrument paused in mid-phrase. Silence. Miriam felt as if Robert Loftus's room had become blank space behind the wooden door.

Knockknockknockknockknockknockknock.

More silence. She knew he had to be there. He hadn't been swallowed up by the floorboards.

Knockknockknockknock...

Click. Click. Creak.

"Yes? Hello, Ms. West. May I help you?"

The red turtleneck sweater that had been yanked over his head curled its lip around his jaw. His cheeks picked up its glow and made Mr. Loftus look as if he were blushing.

"Yes, Ms. West?"

Miriam suddenly realized that the red turtleneck sweater had nothing to do with Mr. Loftus's coloring. He had been blowing hard through a mouthpiece and was presently exasperated. With her. And she had come over here to yell at him.

"Mrs. West!"

"Um. Hello. I was just wondering what piece you were playing."

"You came all the way over here to ask me that?"

"Yes. And to ask you to please finish it so I could hear the ending."

"Mrs. West, I was playing a jazz scale. It is not a piece of music. If you wish to hear the end, you simply need to imagine the notes continuing to drift lower and lower in pitch."

"I see. Well, don't let me stop you!"

"Yes. Thank you." Slam. Click. Click. Silence.

Robert Loftus did not play again until Miriam had returned to her room.

Miriam had gone to the grocery late in the evening so as to avoid the recliner and the boredom. She even put on the white dress with the blue embroidery. Heaven only knows why. Everything about Antonio's was nasty. And he would keep her at the counter for thirty minutes chatting about the weather, and politics, and his family and she would lean against the counter to make a point and lean back to find a streak of dirt across her stomach. And she would hold her groceries in front of her and continue to speak to that damn Antonio.

She returned at ten o'clock with only a little damage done to her dress. She put the groceries away methodically. Ten fifteen. Miriam sauntered into the living room, eyes carefully focused on the television. She turned on the set and listened carefully to every word that came out of Johnny Carson's mouth. Tonight's guests: a 98 year old couple with the same birthday, a jazz trumpet player, a new and upcoming comedian. During the commercial, Miriam went into her bedroom and removed the sandals from her swollen feet, slid the itcing pantyhose off the back of her thighs and pulled them the rest of the way by the toes, unbuttoned her dress and let it drop to the floor. A jazz trumpet player? She hurried back into the living room, going straight to the window. Who cares if he saw her in her slip. Would he be watching Johnny Carson also?

No, he wouldn't. The blond with the chignon was once again balanced in the window, this time only wearing a man's dress shirt. Her back was arched painfully against the window frame, her bare leg dangled against the bricks of the exterior wall. Every few moments, the burning tobacco at the end of her cigarette would ignite and she would dangle it out the window, sprinkling ashes on the darkness.

Robert came to meet her there. His arm reached across to the thigh that brushed the brick and pulled her body from the windowsill. The cigarette drifted to the concrete. He leaned out the window and gazed upon it, laughing. The blond pulled him through the curtains and out of Miriam's sight.

Tomorrow, Sarah would hear about such activities.

Damn Sarah. Where in the hell could she be? Miriam must have called a thousand times. In the morning after breakfast. Midmorning. Before lunch. After lunch. More times than she could count this afternoon. During dinner. And now it was nightfall and Sarah still hadn't returned. Where is she? What if there was an emergency or something?

Nightfall and she hadn't seen Robert Loftus all day. Miriam had waited for a chance to catch him in another lewd act with that woman. Waited to document it in her memory and present it to Sarah and the whole damn building if necessary. Just wait Mr. Trumpet Player. You're outta here.

Pacing about with the GE cordless, Miriam noticed the bright orange dot in the darkness and scurried to her windowsill. But the blond in the chignon was not there. It was Robert Loftus leaning out of his window. Smoking a cigarette. Looking in her direction.

Miriam stared at him hard. She refused to break eye contact as she put down the phone. You just keep looking Mr. Loftus. Mr. Trumpet Player. Mr. I-allow-barely-

clothed-women-to-hang-around-on-my-windowsill. Now Mr. Peeping Tom.

Miriam bent her head suddenly toward her chest. Frantically she undid the buttons, her fingers slipping on the plastic mother of pearl. The knot in her sash refused to cooperate and she wedged her thick fingers between the material and tugged the knot free. Look up. Look at him. Still looking. Good. Unzip. Hurry. Pull the dress off. Get your damn elbows out of the sleeves! Hurry. Look up. He's just taking a drag. Cross arms. Grab hem of the slip. Pull! Slip tangled around the wrist. Get it off. Pantyhosepantyhosepantyhose—where is the waist?! Underneath that roll of fat. So what. Off. Come off. Don't lose your balance. Look up. Still looking. What a pervert. The bra won't unhook. Unhook dammit! There. Standing there. Look up. He's not looking! Look at me dammit! Look at me you pervert! Look! Look! LOOK!

Knockknockknockknockknockknockknockknockknockknock.

"Mrs. West, are you in there?"

Hyperventilating, Miriam crashed to the floor.

"Mrs. West, this is security. Are you in there?"

Holding her hand over her mouth so that he couldn't hear her breathe, Miriam began to crawl to the bedroom.

"Mrs. West, I'm asking you real nice now to open the door."

The bathrobe was missing.

"Mrs. West?"

In the clothes hamper. Miriam pulled herself into it, taking deep breaths to calm herself.

A click. Another click.

"I'm (breathe) coming (breathe)...yes?"

"Mrs. West, Mrs. Ratchett claims you've been doing some sort of naked aerobic show in front of the window this evening. Now, we can't be having that kind of thing going on around here. I'm afraid I'm going to have to report this. It'll be mentioned tomorrow at the building meeting..."



## NEW MEXICO: AND OTHER SUCH STATES

Miles and Kitty Calico rested on a green and blue checkered picnic blanket beneath the cooling shade of a Bodhi tree which possessed a most dramatic lean. A half drawn carafe of red wine sat to their side as they indulged one another with tender caresses and other such loving affections that conformed with the most current of styles. The summer's heat lingered still, but its power and thought-altering force had fallen prey to the chilling autumn winds. It is a time honored cycle, repeated generation to generation. Soon the leaves would curl up like burnt feathers and litter the ground with their tiny corpses.

A man, slightly above average in all regards played the spectator for the youths' embraces from a nearby park bench. His mind reflected on his own past, a time when he would often think about his future, which by his calculation, would place him at exactly this moment. He glanced again to the contortionist couple and grimaced, realizing the presence of an important moment, like some unknown stranger waiting around the corner to give you that key piece of information which has eluded you up to now. He averted his attention to the Calico's young son who was stumbling about as if he were drunk or like an inexperienced man in the rough waters of the North Sea trying to walk to the bar across the deck for another White Russian. The boy had just discovered the existence and purpose of his legs.

"Hullo son, how are you this morning? ...Not quite to the talking stage eh? Understand completely and sympathize... I was like that, so much to say but no way of expressing yourself to the other party — frustrating." He adjusted a cufflink as the boy gazed at him fiercely and with fiery eyes, scoring his actions with his low, audible breathing. The man, being socially upright and unaccustomed to being stared at by anyone, felt obligated to fill the prevailing silence. "I don't suppose you've ever been to New Mexico?" In fact he had. He was born in Albuquerque almost two ago. "No? Ha! Went there once myself, Albuquerque — dreadful place that city... Oh, but am I boring you my dingy little tot?" The child picked up a lump of clay and smeared it in and around his mouth as if to say, "No, no old bean, quite fascinating and all that. Please, do continue." "No? Well, anyway, frightful burg, entirely without a soul, void as a drilled tooth, not a trace my boy. A city without a soul is a pathetic thing to see... And full of greasy, dive restaurants. A vegetarian might drive himself out of the bean, fly the coop entirely and what! Ha! Ha! But that's not really the crux of the issue. I'm warming to that. I went with another purpose besides surveying the spiritual fiber and the dining facilities of the burg." He glanced at the couple preparing themselves for a torrid evening at home. His intestinal track knotted like stray yarn. "Suffice it to say, my boy, and it will suffice, I went there only to have every emotion stripped from me like muscle being shorn from the bone. Yes, that's the sensation exactly- left, a hollow vessel, the last residue of prior fluid contents draining out entirely. The desert crept into my brain that day, filling a leathery carcass with sand and silicon. All that remained was a purpose and a direction. The way you are facing is the way you should go. It was a necessary journey, my featherless pigeon." He sighed, "It's funny. The man who is writing this all down (waving frantically) in his emerald green book or scroll, he has a complete and utter control over all my thoughts and action. He is a god to this world, whom some worship and some, some just write letters to the editor. But here's the zinger my sullied young companion, I can't help but feel that the man who is writing all this, some anal demigod, also feels that there is some invisible and highly weird force guiding his thoughts and pushing him like an unseen and unwanted parent with her subtle exertions." The man has been rocking with his speech ever so gently, swaying as it were with the rhythm of the emotional air. He slumped and cocked his head back, exposing his throat to the razor

scented kisses of the breeze. He sat, as if waiting for his head to fall off.

The child lost interest in this most peculiar man. He moved in order to investigate the highway nearby which had caught his nimble attention. The young couple to grapple beneath the Bodhi tree, oblivious to all, two kissing skulls. The man, upon finding his head exactly where he had left it moments ago, righted himself and muttered, "Don't bury me... indeed!" He grinned and pulled out an antique straight razor and began, fervently, to shave his stubble down to smooth, youthful flesh.

*Photography  
and  
Art*































# *The Student*

WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY  
WINSTON-SALEM, N.C.  
WINTER 1990





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# Wake Forest University Press Celebrates Fifteenth Anniversary

By Scott Stubbs

Founded in 1976, Wake Forest University Press has established itself as the premier outlet for Irish poetry in the United States. The poets range from the most popular contemporary Irish writers to more obscure new poets. Now, with two published volumes of French poetry and a third in the works, the press continues to enlarge both its scope and its international reputation.

When Dillon Johnston, with the help of Provost Ed Wilson, initiated the proposal for the press, he'd been frustrated at how hard it was to find Irish poets' books in this country. "They just weren't published here," he said. When asked why the press chose Irish poets specifically, he said, "In England, nothing [in poetry] was happening. In Ireland, something exciting and refreshing was taking shape." What was "happening" then has since been referred to as a second literary renaissance in Ireland. Johnston, a Professor of English, flew to Ireland and talked with publishers and poets to see if they were interested in having an American base. They were, and the press was underway.

In April, 1976, the press came out with its first three volumes: John Montague's *Slow Dance*; Ciaran Carson's *The New Estate*; and the late Austin Clarke's *Selected Poems*. Richard Murdoch, former Rare



All photos by Scot Stubbs and Daniel Minus

**WFU Press founder Dillon Johnston and manager Candide Jones in their Tribble Hall office.**

Books Curator for the Z. Smith Reynolds Library, has done most of the jacket designs and a number of whole book designs which have all been well received. Johnston discovered Ciaran Carson's poetry in an Irish literary journal and went to Blackstaff Press (in Ireland) to interest them in co-publishing. WFU Press has published three volumes of his work since.

"Carson is a poet who can make his





Derek Mahon and Kenan Professor Allen Mandelbaum at the reception celebrating Wake Forest University Press's fifteenth anniversary.

reader examine his own views about the world. People who read him begin talking to each other in a different way, begin regarding the world differently," says Johnston.

When he first went to Ireland, Johnston had in mind poets such as Seamus Heaney, Derek Mahon, John Montague and Thomas Kinsella. Heaney had a connection to an American publisher, Farrar-Strauss, through his friend Robert Lowell. But the other poets have all been published by WFU Press since, the press most recently being offered Derek Mahon's *Selected Poems*.

The press's list is quite impressive. In addition to the poets already mentioned, the press publishes Louis MacNeice, Denis Devlin, Richard Murphy, Paul Muldoon, Michael Longley and Eilean Ni Chuilleanain, who read on campus this semester. Derek Mahon read early in the semester at a celebration of the press's fifteenth year of operation. Almost all the

poets published by WFU Press have read on campus in the past ten years, a tradition which is sure to continue as long as Irish poetry and Wake Forest are associated.

In 1987, the press decided to turn outward to begin other ventures. They published Seamus Deane's *Celtic Revivals*, a book of criticism of modern Irish literature, and Rachel Giese's *Rachel Giese: The Donegal Pictures*. The Rachel Giese book has received high acclaim from *The New Yorker* and from reviewers in Ireland. Soon after these books came out, Medbh McGuckian's *On Ballycastle Beach* appeared. Of McGuckian's poetry, Calvin Bedient wrote in *Parnassus*, "...of twentieth century poets writing in English, she strikes me as one of the most original and compelling and as easily the most white-hot Irish poet since Yeats."

In 1988, the press began looking into French poetry. Derek Mahon had translated Philippe Jaccottet's *Selected Poems*, and Germaine Bree, former Kenan Professor of

Humanities, had offered her help, so the move seemed natural. This year, the next two volumes of contemporary French poets will be published. The first, due out in May, is the *Selected Poems* of Pierre Reverdy translated by John Ashbery, Mary Ann Caws and Patricia Terry. The third volume will be ready in the fall.

The WFU Press keeps busy with so many books coming out. In fact, it has not had an idle year since it began, publishing as many as five books, or as few as one

book in a year.

With such an enviable group of poets and impressive list of books, the Wake Forest University Press will probably not have any idle years to look forward to. And with their extension into contemporary French poets, their international reputation grows stronger every day. Congratulations to everyone at the Press for a successful first fifteen years and here's hoping for an even more successful and prosperous future.

Retired Professor of English Lee Potter and Derek Mahon after Mahon's reading in February.



# Poetry

## IN PITY MY VIE FOR SOLITUDE IS THWARTED

There is nothing worse for a sock  
than to lack another.  
It lies in a paper bag  
in the sewing room, unmatched  
untouched, unworn and clean,  
its abandonment  
fears made real.

I remember once I felt pity for  
all those widowed socks, left alone  
by the genocide of washing,  
so I put them all on, tube socks,  
socks for soccer stained green,  
thin silk socks that graced my father,  
my sister's ankle socks, thick winter socks,  
socks for boy scouts, dress socks  
and play socks, layer over layer,  
patterns and colors and stripes,  
millions of them warmed my feet  
until we all walked  
without touching the ground.

### **'NO DETOUR TO HOLINESS'**

When I was thirteen I cried  
because I could not find God  
and no longer wanted to.

Sleeping late one Sunday,  
I saw millions of small children  
hung like wreaths on countless homes  
and there were no mourners to read  
the small epitaphs, no crowds  
lining the streets curious  
at such a sight.

And I realize now  
how fitting that the streets  
were empty,  
how fitting that I was there  
that the words below each child  
said only  
'nailed to a door  
monday gone.'



## SURRY COUNTY

To the west, a rotting tobacco leans  
into the earth  
and a train frowns in the  
distance  
where toothless girls play,  
leaping from  
car  
to  
car,  
pigtails swinging wildly in the sky.

## NEW ATLANTIS

Manhattan is sinking.  
Thirty four thousandths  
of an inch  
each time the TIMES turn.  
Every blink  
of the sun's eye  
drops it deeper  
into water.  
The Empire State, the World Trade,  
great baleens lurch  
and falter.

Poetry lies all around us.  
My ticking Seiko, for example:  
"St. Steel + Base Metal Middle  
Base Metal Bezel  
St. Steel Back"

Today whole cities are built  
on baser metals—  
Platinum, silver, and gold...

Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens  
boroughs and substraits,  
like the ancient island  
west of Gibraltar.

In the great cemetery,  
excavate the obvious,  
do not overturn  
the homes of old bones  
better off lost.

Strains seep freely  
caught on a breeze  
like crematory ash  
stealing out to sea.

## PNEUMONIA

The decor of the doctor's office:  
nice benches, functional fifties style,  
and magazines such as Southern  
Living and Home and Garden (or is it House-  
I can never remember). All of this  
crisp and dry as blisters,  
like the inside of your car, the world  
outside matching perfectly.

I think of anti-freezes and brake  
fluids in this office, and new  
oil, and hydraulic pressurized piping,  
unknown liquids running through the eternal  
copper night.

The in-between is somehow these lungs  
inside my body, usually healthy white-ish  
blue, like in pictures, drenched  
with water and sticky, wholesome goo  
produced by cells and cells in another  
place. I can see the color changing,  
like rusting hulks of burned-out cars,  
brown and grainy at the bottom  
where the wheels used to turn,  
fading gently toward the dented roof.

## PLAYING POOL WITH MY FATHER

My father silently parodies  
the perfection of his stick,  
tempts the right angle it forms  
with the floor to knock  
him down, reaching inside  
the table after his scratch.

The cue ball has no color;  
bloodless primitive, it is bleached  
bone raw on a felt jungle  
always rolling to me, to  
corner pockets level somehow  
with my balls, the family jewels.

Inside him, under the table  
there are ramps  
to pyramids in the eyes,  
tunnels for vague contempt  
holding only clacking sounds  
and rolling balls.

## COLORING OUTSIDE THE LINES

I've been coloring outside the lines, but don't tell the teacher.

Colors run together here, flowing from the walls,  
Painting the running canals.

Our colors follow, leaving us intertwined in brief comfort,  
Transparent, equal, in form original.

My brown skin and eyes are a comfort to her now.  
Outside this pause, they are a magnet for eyes and pain.  
Her sickness, need, for a mother's care, somehow found me.

My hand brushes her brown hair, hesitantly — I saw a flash of color — then,  
returns to her waist (it is at home there) and she smiles. Mutual intrigue.

It is a strange position we're in, this chair now  
holding the numbness of sleeping limbs and a general wonder and pain.  
Together, with an adventurous tingle, my mind daring not to agree with me.

Wrapped in a blanket, she is, staring now sadly at the retreating light.  
As the sun's enlightenment finally leaves us shadowed in the hallway's night,  
European days fade, the sun abandoning us, behind ancient, immovable palazzi  
Outside, the water darkens, colors separate and crawl back to the walls.

Simply a friend, ill, no threat to my long ago captured heart, color fast still.  
Are we truly taught all we should know in kindergarten?  
An all-American education.  
The first thing they teach us is to color inside the lines.



## CELEBRATION

*"... a rite undore than 80 million African women. Female circumcision — the mutilation of the external genital organs — is a centuries-old rite of passage intended to ensure that young women become desirable wives."*

- Time, 'Women: The Road Ahead,' Fall 1990

Under the moonlight, starlight,  
fingers linked you pull  
me, gently

Oceans away  
under the sky of first  
morning, fingernails  
bite  
purple circles of  
finger tip bruises  
on flailing arms  
that begin to fear  
what she has not imagined.

Our orbit broken  
I am a moon  
colliding with your  
atmosphere in  
the blood warming  
first stirrings  
of a kiss

A glint of metal,  
shards of glass  
a sinister sparkle  
like no star  
razor kissing flesh.

Flushed, pulsing  
warmth spreads  
to my brain,  
lower  
kiss deepening

Blood flowing  
no warming  
but blood, life  
surging, pouring  
thighs  
knees  
calves  
feet  
red.

Toppling, tripping  
we land on sheets,  
pillows  
under the  
insistent weight of you

Razor no  
less insistent  
flesh joins blood  
in the falling  
to the floor.

A few buttons  
and I am undone  
open

Thorns into  
what is left  
an end  
she is closed,  
sealed.

Head back,  
white neck stretched  
and gleaming  
I enclose you.

A girl, child  
faint from pain  
her head lolls  
on her chest  
as they wrap  
bandages from ankle  
to waist  
celebrating her loss.

## ROCKVALE

Up at dawn,  
I climb the fence of our farm  
to see in smooth curve  
with the world,  
Wheat swaying in the wind.

Jutting above the horizon,  
The thresher,  
Rusted sides shaking from the effort,  
Gathers from the field.  
Tiny grains,  
Shorn from their stalks,  
Drop unevenly  
from its fingers  
like coins.

*(UNTITLED)*

pools of blue  
twilight  
break the spell  
cast  
by the nuclear orange blossom beauty  
of midwest dust  
and tumbleweeds.  
misplaced bonsai  
writhe in steel wire wind  
breaking the cant  
of waving wheatfields,  
and the sun drowns in a sea  
of purple mountains  
somewhere  
in oklahoma.

**ASBESTOS BLUES :  
AN EARLY 80'S NIGHTMARE**

I look at the ceiling on a cold school day  
And see what others only dismay  
Asbestos, Asbestos I tell no lie  
Look now here a flake stuck in my eye

Waits in the wings, then hits like a bus  
The white crusted poison comes down upon us  
Snows down to the desks like dandruff on shoulders  
Onto the apples to be pierced by molars

So I issue my warning  
And I issue it now  
Like music from a trumpet or a moo from a cow  
The day will come when asbestos will settle  
On our dry rotted throats to pluck our lives like a petal.



## MICKIE AND THE ARMADILLO

I must have lost myself  
somewhere on the road between  
Norman, Oklahoma and Big Spring, Texas  
because the gutted four wheeler laying on its side by the fence  
and the mailbox with one hinge busted  
aren't seeming like anything I've seen before.  
Neither is the trail of thin dust that sifts through the screen door  
coating the cracked linoleum,  
or the pantry shelves full of wheat germ and oat bran,  
or the tractor wheel jutting up through  
the floor of the front room controlling the TV antenna.

The wind bullies this house  
and I hear the walls flap and cower.  
This old man, feet on the tractor wheel, eyes closed, his head falling off his neck,  
and drool collecting in his doughy cheek.  
I don't recognize him.

I sit shuffling papers,  
waiting for locusts and dusk.  
I sit shuffling thoughts  
at a kitchen table that looks like my granddaughter's play tea table.  
I think that armadillo I hit on 128 must have been me.  
That'd explain why somewhere between Norman and Big Spring  
I became a stranger in my own life.

## THE ROAD

i walked a ways  
on the right side of the road  
where you feel a little lopsided, off-kilter,  
cuz the angled pavement slopes and stops, the sharp gravel  
waits and then grinds down to the soft dust of foolish earth.  
my right hip just into my ribs  
when i touch my bare foot to the hot then cool (as my toes dig in)  
side-of-the-road dust.  
my left foot hits a tuft of squeaky crab grass  
that fringes the road.  
the ditch is stuffed with thistles, those little blue flowers  
i always forget the name of, some dandies if they're hearty,  
but mostly just tangled grasses.  
so i walked a ways, staying in the dust  
cuz damn,  
that asphalt gets hot and shimmery and burps up tar  
in the summer.  
i imagined myself, how i must look to a sweaty young farmer  
driving up in a red Ford pickup with manual transmission  
and a gimme cap that says Red Man under the grease and dust.  
see, i was wearing these old cut-offs that are really too small for me  
seeing how they're seven years old now.  
they got a slit across the back of my right thigh that  
i had to patch with a blue bandana.  
and that old white cotton shirt with little holes all in it from  
where i splattered bleach by mistake.  
sure, i'd like to imagine that young man driving  
across the Indiana border to the College Corner liquor store  
cuz there's no tax  
is thinking i'm looking ok as he drives up behind me.

maybe he'll stop, say,

hey, you need a ride somewhere?  
and maybe i'd smile a little thinking that his arms  
are brown then pink as he catches the cuff of his t-shirt  
on the rolled down window when he slides his elbow out  
and cocks his head around the side of the truck.

nah, no thanks.  
i think i'd say,

i'm just gonna walk a ways longer.  
he'd say,

alright, don't get hit now.  
smile, spit a brown stream, tuck his head back in,  
grind the gears a little in disappointment and kick up dust as he pulled away.  
yeah, i kinda like that scene.  
or maybe i'd just keep walking on the right side  
of the road in the grey dust  
feeling a little sick from looking lopsided at the trees and  
fields of soybeans and corn for so long  
until someone came along  
catching up to me on the other side of the road.  
maybe i'd slide my eyes from the white line to the right of my feet,  
past the squirrel dry of its life,  
over the grey-yellow median line,  
past the cross-the-way white line, to slim brown feet —  
one in the side-of-the-road-dust and one fighting crab grass.  
maybe she walks my speed, i walk hers.  
the islands of oaks and sycamores lord over  
the beanfields behind her  
spouting out a green that tints the sky near them.  
maybe she'll say,  
you don't have to walk like that, you know, all lopsided over there.  
you just been walking on the wrong side.  
damn this asphalt's hot and sticky.

**HOI POLLOI  
(OR, I AM HE AS YOU ARE HE  
AND WE ARE ALL TOGETHER)**

Never having danced a Morris myself,  
(the Elizabethan Fat-Tuesday bead-and-play  
soiree),  
and knowing the hedge and turn of chapbook tales,  
I see:  
the still-snap of the hobby-horse,  
papier-mache and slipshod oak  
spit-chewed and vulgar;  
the greens of linen and wood-grain  
caught in mid-swoop, mid-crow,  
all unsheathed for the Big Party,  
the Celebration of us-and-not-you-ness.

(For kazoos and mass-voice, one-two:)  
Ooooooooooh,  
Here's to Brother Brother,  
who, when about to die,  
and sinking down beneath the waves,  
loud shouted out, Here's why:  
Ooooooooooh,  
Be that I am man,  
and not the swarth Kentaur,  
I'll moor the horseass to my own,  
and call myself the czar.

Moor and Moor, and ass and ass,  
the tricky business of the association.  
Know why that Othello was a git.

## CRITIQUE A LA MODE

Sudden criticism  
races through harpsichords  
and drops  
out basement doors  
to this country where a caveman's gritty yawn  
in plaster  
stretches his teeth through history  
and reflects in the shallow pools  
of an afternoon shower.  
Innocent dogwood blooms bend, break  
under the water weight  
Silly to a woman's eyes  
sighs overthrow her mouth  
and escape through ghost house windows  
(hidden souls).  
Patterns of deference continue to tug  
at the ancient pasture for front door delivery  
until the thick space of rebellion  
opens the city,  
edging belief into hedged hemlock rows  
planted with poles under your king's control.  
The new thesis  
jumps  
through the jostled aperture  
and bubbles up into miles of countryside,  
watched by the clear camouflage of lucid faces  
and one poodle pasted to the window  
of a motoring station wagon.  
  
mumbles of happy ever after  
commence their slight brigade.

## ON MY WAY TO WORK ONE SUNDAY MORNING

In the immediate maps you leave me  
I realize the odd hypocrisy of easy chants.  
Manic horns in brassy flight steady above these words  
and laugh as I might.

Steely guilt  
made soft by treetop horizons standing witness  
to the stale light's sudden rout  
over reflective architecture.

Morning drives  
poking through the flat night's frothy stout  
to show possible destinations.

I find my breath in the asphalt steam  
and choose dreary verse for you  
stolen at that.

I've touched these undercurrents,  
(cut below the soil),  
peeled my drunken face,  
but never understood  
the substance of her grace.

Foamy cells  
skimming through the thick brain's textbook art  
sing for afternoon utopias.

my sensitive mock builds  
I take mine own hand in place of yours  
prayer  
stolen at last  
my pasture.



## APPLIANCES

Third grade was brown.  
The girl scout uniform  
I wore on Wednesdays.  
I stood knee-deep in the  
Echoes of the rusty dumpster  
The Wednesday I threw out my retainer,  
Rummaging through  
Pudding lids and paper sacks.  
Garbage slick with saliva,  
Sticky with licked fingerprints.

"We'll find it," Andy promised.  
I found my note to him:  
Do you like me Yes No Maybe.  
Nothing was checked.  
Still, together we dug.  
He sang a song  
To the crusty black banana peels.  
I wiped my hands on my badge sash,  
Sniffed, smiled, kept hope.  
We searched for the  
Pink speck of wired plastic  
Till the buses came with a hiss and a screech.

LETT ER

hairmail, baremail, wearmail

finally, a use for my tongue,  
wallpapering myself with  
airmail stickers and Samuel P. Langley Aviation Pioneer  
in hopes of flight

not properly enveloped,  
not properly sealed,  
but first class  
destination known

ere male

# *Fiction*

## WYATT & MILES

Wyatt sat on his gray and burgundy quilt doodling on the cover of a matchbox with a piece of coal and picking his teeth with a match. The doodle depicted a Victorian ballroom dancer waltzing with a giant black crow or raven. It was not an exceedingly successful endeavor due in a large part to the diminutive nature of both his medium and supplies.

"What gives, Miles? You been dosing again? Remember that last time — I'm not dragging you up that stairwell again, especially if you sing those Bulgarian folk songs. I hate that." Wyatt rolled over to address and glare into those eyes of his roommate, Miles Calico. Miles was looking as if he had lost something three years ago and was trying to remember what it was that he had lost in the first place. Miles was sullen and preoccupied. "Or is it New Mexico again?"

"No. It isn't that."

"Good... Want a match?"

"I haven't anything to smoke."

"So..."

"It's death, Wy." Miles looked up, rubbing his hair with slender fingers meant perhaps to play upon the violin but tonight — merely fleshy teeth for an organic and ineffective comb. "I'm afraid of dying. Sex and death. Those are the only two real things that I can think of at the moment. I'm not frightened by sex — but death... Ooh, yeah!" His violinist fingers clasped his head, and he moaned a bit. Wyatt stood, placed his hands behind his back (to give an air of credibility) and began to pace.

"Think about tattoos."

"Tattoos?" Miles wasn't really expecting much of an answer, and he felt confident that whatever Wyatt would blab about would be basically useless.

"Yeah. Whenever I start getting down and contemplative about the biggies — you know, death, God, breakfast, marriage — I think about what kind of tattoo I would get if I ever got one. I mean what if some intoxicated, 300-pound Lebanese man forced me at gunpoint to get tattooed? You know how that can happen and you've got to be prepared for such eventualities."

"What would you get?" asked Miles.

"Huh?"

"If you were forced to get tattooed with your life in the balance, then what would you get?"

"Well, for the moment I've narrowed it down to either a fish, an angel, or a chest of drawers."

"Really?"

"Yeah, I'm really keen on the chest — a nice Chippendale with mahogany and all that. You never know."

"Yeah, you never know. That's my entire problem, Wy, encased neatly within your colored scar tissue philosophy." Miles was in really bad shape. He was losing the muscular control of his face and was making some weird ticks and contortions.

"Look, Miles. We fear death because all of life is transient, marred by change, end and finality. Nothing is truly stagnant. Death represents an end to the variance of life and that's what's bugging the shit out of you." Wyatt stopped pacing and began to rock back and forth on his feet. "Besides, how can anything that is bound to happen to everyone be all that interesting or scary? I stopped trying to answer the question of the Meaning of Life when I realized it wasn't a multiple choice question." Wyatt stretched his arm out and tried with all his mental powers to levitate the matchbox. Nothing much happened except that Miles rose, declaring his claustrophobic condition and that he was going out for a walk.

The London air was chill and Miles Calico only intended to walk around the block.

He was fascinated by the fog; it was like his imagination — you never knew what was lurking about. He kicked a bottle cap. He had moved to the United Kingdom nearly a year ago, just after his two-year-old son had been killed playing on the highway. He could never forgive himself. He was inconsolable. He left his wife, half out of despair and half out of fear.

He'd met Wyatt two months ago while he was disinfecting the telephone that Miles was about to use. That was Wyatt's job — he disinfected public pay phones. Now they shared a flat. Wyatt was a little weird. Miles recalled his voice reverberating down the elevator shaft as he left that evening, "Never have I found life... so disgusting, painful, unfair, and at the same time so beautiful, sublime and joyous. Every morning I awake with the urge to burst out laughing and crying simultaneously." It was a very slow elevator. "When the depression gets too heavy, the vertigo beckons from the void beyond any human ability to ignore it, screaming like a harpy — think about tattoos. I'd have crucified myself against this wall a long time ago if I knew any way I could get the last nail in. It's a personal journey." Miles wasn't sure if he had heard the last bit, as the lift had reached the bottom of the shaft.

A frosty wind blew as Miles paused beneath a lamppost to raise his collar, shrouded in the luminous green aura of the light. Christ, he'd watched so many of his friends decay, mentally or otherwise. There was Wyatt. He started trying to levitate things, first peanuts, then anything. There was his sister, Nigel; God, was that what was happening to him? He shuddered and tried to think of sunsets and Christmas at the same time, but mentally he could not synthesize the Frederick Church-like image with the image of Ole St. Nick. He had a sudden and incredibly real urge to fall in love. He looked about frantically for any candidates, but the alley was deserted. He walked around the corner, balancing on cobble stones while wondering who on the Earth could have the lack of sense to put round objects in what otherwise should be a flat surface and walked into a pub — King Tut's Wah Wah Hut. The name seemed to fit his mood.

He entered, disentangled himself from his great coat and sauntered over to a fleshy young girl with strawberry-colored hair. Her pale green frock clashed so harshly with her flesh tones that she looked ill or maybe pregnant.

"Hello sweets," chirped Miles as he leaned roguishly against the bar. "Did you know that I'm fifteen inches tall lying on my back?" It took 2.3 seconds for Miles' remark to the register, for her decision to be made, and for a gin and tonic to splash in Miles' face. The alcohol stung his eyes. He produced a scarlet handkerchief, wiped his face, and began sucking the liquid out of the scarf. At least, he wouldn't have to order a drink. His breath tasted foul, his tongue was a dried fish, and his greasy hair was tangled beyond any repair. What had begun as a refreshing walk had turned into a downward spiral.

"Avoid the vortex," Wyatt once admonished at one of his more whimsical moments. "In the Western culture, we all live with an inherent sense of guilt. Not to feel it shows one to be shallow and callous. To feel it — well, that just hurts. You see, when we forgive our mothers and fathers for making us who we are, we are actually forgiving ourselves! Two incompatible components trying to form one self-sufficient, symbiotic organism. There's the ticket — your key to happiness and success." All this would have sounded far more profound if Wyatt had not been performing a handstand at the moment, his long brown hair waving like inverted sea grass on the ocean floor and the cuffs of his pants creeping down his legs, exposing his pale and skinny calves. It sort of ruined the drama of the moment.

Miles dropped his head against the bar, which resulted in a profoundly loud "thud." It was so loud, in fact, that one of the patrons of King Tut's Wah Wah Hut would comment on the sound to his mistress as they exited a cab the next day. Calico just lay there feeling his brow throb and adhere itself to the sticky mahogany counter. "I suppose the trick is getting that last nail in," he said aloud and fell on the floor.



## ACCEPTANCE

"Try to hit the duck's head."

Squinting through the sight of the gun, I focused on the kelly green curve.

"Shoot," he ordered.

The b.b. popped the paper and pinged off the chain link fence on which Eric had posted the target. I slid on the safety switch before moving forward to examine the drawing.

"You missed," Eric informed me.

"Ay, *chat*, you've got to do better than that!"

Our grandfather stood uphill from us, green eyes knitted together by a single black brow, staring me into the mud that was sucking at the bottom of my boots.

"I don't shoot a gun every day like Eric does."

"But you missed it completely, *chat*. You move your body when you fire. Keep still."

Eric took the gun from my hand, flipped off the safety, and pumped and fired three times, obliterating the crayola black eye.

"See, Eric doesn't move. Now you try."

Shutting my eyes to break his stare, I quietly ordered every muscle to calm its nervous shaking, its spasmodic fatigue, its shuddering complaints. My index finger slowly extended and struggled to pull back the trigger.

"A little better. But now you're too stiff. Y'all come in now."

The heat from the open oven door caused my frozen ears to tingle. My grandmother was bent over, staring at the turkey that bubbled and hissed. Momma joined her, and with a nod they agreed to hoist the twenty-four pounder from its nest onto a waiting platter. My aunt was coaxing a cranberry mold from its container onto assorted lettuce leaves.

"Whatch'all been doin' out there by the lake?" my aunt asked.

"Havin' a shootin' contest," Eric answered.

"Nuh-uh. It wasn't a contest. We were just shootin' at the targets Eric made last night."

"You're just mad 'cause you couldn't hit the target," Eric countered.

"Shut up."

"Y'all hush," my uncle called from his kitchen chair. "Ladies, I'm just about ready to adjourn to the dining room."

"Now, Lizzy," my grandmother motioned to me from the stove, "you're in charge in here. I don't want food anywhere except on the plates and in y'all's mouths."

"Yes, ma'am."

With a turn and a stare, she stopped the movements of the boys at the table. Eric had been searching the pile of rolls for the largest one and in his quest had managed to build a pyramid beside Kyle's and Christopher's plates. The two brothers were laughing at the eldest and nudging my own brother, who watched with silent giggles.

"Behave," my grandmother said, emphasizing the word with a slow beat of her eyelashes.

Placing my hands on my hips, I surveyed the table. "What do y'all want to drink?"

"Beer," said Eric. The boys squirmed with laughter.

"What do you want to drink?"

"Momma!" Eric screamed at the dining room, "Lizzy won't let me drink what I want!"

"You boys listen to Lizzy," came the reply.

I sloshed his glass full of ice water.



I stood beside my grandmother and watched as her wrinkled hands snatched up a steaming casserole dish, moving her dishrag around the outside and then the inside. She set it down upon the countertop and I watched her fingerprints evaporate off the white handles. Inhaling quickly, I thrust my hand into the dripping pile of silverware, felt a hot fork between my fingers, and juggled it within my rag before I could dry it off completely.

From the darkness of the hallway emerged with my aunt four creatures completely outfitted in camouflaged garb. The eldest moved white eyes above black grease paint. "Bye, Momma. We're goin' to the graveyard." The green and brown clones, struggling with their combat boots, waddled behind their leader to the back door.

"Oh, *mes chats*, it's too cold and it's almost dark!" my grandmother said.

"Oh, they'll be all right," my aunt assured her.

Indeed they would. Last summer, Eric and I, bound together by the boredom of our eleven years, had found the graveyard. We had wandered into the blackness until the only things we were aware of were the weeds on our bare legs and the mosquitoes in our ears. Something had moved and we had run, hearts keeping time with our feet, all the way to the back door.

"I want to go too," I said.

"Nuh-uh. No girls," Christopher stated.

"No girls," my brother repeated.

"Watch me," I said. I strutted toward the door and slid my arms into my red dress coat. As I slipped the buttons through the holes, I felt Eric's glower directed at my busy fingers.

"You better keep up."

"I will." I flung open the door and allowed the night wind to slap me across the face.

Before stepping into the lot, my cousin Kyle slid his five-year-old hand against my palm. In the streetlight, his cheeks were swollen like tree ornaments. Eric moved forward, side-stepping tree roots and holes that hid in the dark. I felt Kyle move in front of me and pull me along.

Suddenly we were running and I felt Kyle pull my arm sharply. He was jumping across the drainage ditch that appeared as my eyes focused in the dark. Quickly, I threw my body into a forward leap that cleared the ditch but landed my right foot deep in the Louisiana mud. Kyle pulled me up the incline.

We were there. I paused at the first gray stone that tilted back from my gaze. The engraved letters stared at me. I felt my mouth suck in the dry, cold air.

"Come look at this one!"

I knelt in front of the next stone, my pride forcing it to be less menacing.

"Captain John..."

"Lizzy! Don't stand there! You're standin' on his head!" Kyle warned.

Moving sideways, I noticed that only Kyle and I stood there with Captain John. Eric, Christopher and my brother had disappeared.

"Let's go find the other boys."

We moved forward, careful not to step on anybody's head, eyes wide as we peered through the black for a glimpse of the living.

A scream filled my head. My body turned and sprinted. My shoulders tight, I could not pull Kyle along fast enough. As we moved, I heard the screaming stop and be replaced by laughter.

"Go home, chickens! Bok bok bok!"

Kyle was crying. I knelt beside him, feeling the cold ground seeping through my jeans into my skin. Finding a Kleenex in my pocket, I wiped his nose.

"Look what you've done, idiots! You've made him cry!" I yelled into the darkness.

"So what! It worked!"

Taking the little hand in mine, I made my way through the lot toward the street lights where my grandfather rocked from his toes to his heels — laughing.

My head cranked to the other side of the feather pillow to avoid the morning light. The sheet and three blankets that I had hovered under all evening flew to the end of the bed. My grandmother was pinching my toes.

"Get up! Get up! It's ten o'clock, I've got sheets to change, and your cousins are already downstairs fed and clothed."

Climbing out of bed, I helped her pull off the bedclothes and replace them with fresh ones from the linen closet.

"What are they waiting for?"

"They want to go back out to the fields with your grandfather." Humming "*Saut Crapaut*", she turned to the next twin bed and swatted my sleeping brother's behind.

The cab of the truck was going to be crowded with Grandfather and his five grandchildren. Kyle had wanted to sit in the back, but Eric told him his ears would freeze and fall off. I boosted Kyle onto the cracked vinyl seat.

The fields were dark brown because of the frequent rain. Spots of dead yellow grass shivered as vehicles moved past on the highway. A weathered gray shack leaned against a tree, its missing door making it look as if it moaned. Two grain bins appeared from behind the trees. Down the gravel road from where they stood was a sheet metal building.

When the truck stopped, Eric jumped from the seat to the gravel, the rocks shifting under his weight as he ran toward the door. The rest of us moved behind him. I glanced back occasionally to make sure Grandfather was following us.

The great door slid back, revealing farm machinery of all kinds. But in the corner stood six three-wheelers — oversized tricycles with doughnut wheels. With some effort, Eric and Christopher managed to push them from their sleepy, dark corner to the bright chilliness beyond the door.

I waited for my turn, perched upon my own machine. Grandfather walked around the bike, looking at the tires. He tapped the fuel gauge and smiled at me. The machine roared to life and hummed beneath me.

"Give it some gas," Grandfather yelled.

My thumb pushed. The great tricycle lurched forward, then rolled to a stop as I pulled my thumb back.

"All set!"

And I was moving. Bouncing along the muddied path, I followed tractor treads to avoid the ditches. I felt my facial muscles tighten with a smile, and I pushed the lever to pick up speed.

Eric roared past me and onto a mowed field.

I couldn't resist. I slowed slightly as I rolled onto the grass but leaned hard against the handle bars as my three-wheeler accelerated again. I was chasing Eric. He stared back at me, eyes narrowed. I heard his motor go up an octave. I planted my feet on the sideboards and stood, negotiating the bumps of the field, staring at the back of my opponent.

Quickly, he cut to the right, coming back full circle. I turned my head to watch, felt my front tire move down suddenly, felt my chest crash into the fuel gauge. The motor of my bike quit — so had my breathing. I hugged the body of my red machine, begging my lungs to take in air.

"Are you okay?" I heard Eric yell over his own motor.

I did not move. I wanted him to think I had died. I wanted even more badly to breathe.

I heard his motor rev and leave where I was, moving off far behind me. My lungs took a little air, noticed the difference, and took even more. I sat up, a little dizzy, and turned to see my grandfather running in his old man's gait after my slowly trolling cousin.

"Chat, okay now? I should have told you that the tractor mowed the grass in the ditch even with the field. Oh, baby, it's okay..." His voice trailed off in timid chuckles.

"I want to go home," I muttered.

Standing in front of the dresser mirror, I gently touched the bruise beneath the bodice of my dress. A knock sounded on the bedroom door.

"Chat, it's almost time for Mass...oh! Don't you look nice..." My grandmother shut the door lightly. I heard her shoes click against the wooden steps.

I opened the door and followed her, conscious of my grandfather's eyes upon me. He stood at the bottom of the staircase with his hands behind his back.

Placing his hands on my shoulders, he kissed me on the forehead.

"Now you wait right here," he said. He ascended the staircase quickly. I heard the faint sound of music from the bedroom and then he appeared again. From his suit pocket came a small strand of pearls. He swung them around my neck and clicked the sterling silver clasp. I handled them carefully, feeling their oily smoothness against my fingertips.

"You look beautiful, chat."

"Merci, Grand-pere."

He offered me his arm, and we strolled out the front door.



## PONDERING HIERONYMOUS BOSCH

Why do men fight and then celebrate the killing? Can anyone put on a more gruesome spectacle than war? It causes nothing but pain and lingering sorrow. There is no honor. The fear of losing and the anxiety surrounding the unknown is the labor of victory. Nothing at all makes any sense to us except that we do not want to lose, damn all expenses. So we battle and rage around a double negative. We fight in order to not win. We rarely even see our victories — unrecognizable hidden in the undergrowth. We do not necessarily want to win. What can you do when your mind is your only true enemy? Why is it that only the most sensitive and truly caring people bear the brunt of life's agonies. His thoughts began to wander a little as his shackles cut the circulation to his hands, locked firmly against his back side. We do what we believe in, I suppose. It's not the shot that kills you — it's the concussion.

"Cigarette."

"No thanks, don't smoke."

"Blindfold."

"Yes please. That would be most nice." He could better assemble his thoughts in the dark. It was nice. We all need to mirror. It is a basic human requirement to see oneself reflected in another. Most mirror their parents when they are young and from there form their own identities. Others, however, fail to mirror at an early age and must undergo a series of failed relationships, divorces, and child molestation litigation before they form their own identity and things can cool down a bit. A person must see himself reflected through another. Why else would we exclaim that we are all created in God's own image? It is merely man searching for the divine within himself.

"Prepare the line!" The order shredded the air and resounded across the delatate field like a hammer striking an anvil — piercing. His mind quickly flew to thoughts of sexuality, bordering on the perverse. And, embarrassingly enough to say, becoming aroused. He could picture tomorrow's headlines. 'Defiant Hard On in the Face of Death' or 'He Died with his Pecker Up.' He groaned. Oh God, hadn't he explained the polarization of men and women to her? He must have, because it was always on his mind — engraved on his cerebral cortex. There is a duality formed between man and woman whereby two distinct individuals will attempt to merge forming a single organism. Apparently it didn't work by osmosis, because he had been with her for over five years, and he didn't feel any closer to her when they split than when he first met her. When an individual sacrifices for the unit, he benefits not only the other individual but himself as well since the whole organism is affected. Of course the opposite holds true as well. ?A universe based on altruism is one step toward understanding and peace. But that all seemed so very far away now, that with the War and all that.

The last time he could remember seeing her was at a party thrown by some hguay really big in the radio industry. The last words he heard her say, distilled across the smoky, crowded room, were, "Yes, I have had some satisfying sex in the last three months." Then she whisked downstaris to put on a new phonograph, one that would more than likely be painful to his ears and, in some masochistic way, his heart as well. She was a reminder of brighter and merrier things that could have been attained but never were, not with her.

"Ready!" He remembered how at the party he had thought how much the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch reminded him of her, with their grotesque, pig nosed figures. "Aim!" Or was it that she reminded him of Bosch's paintings, the bruised and writhing figures with flowers growing out their asses. Yes, that was an appropriate metaphor that captured the mood of the moment. "FIRE!" It didn't really matter anymore.

*Photography  
and  
Art*





*Sharon Letchworth*



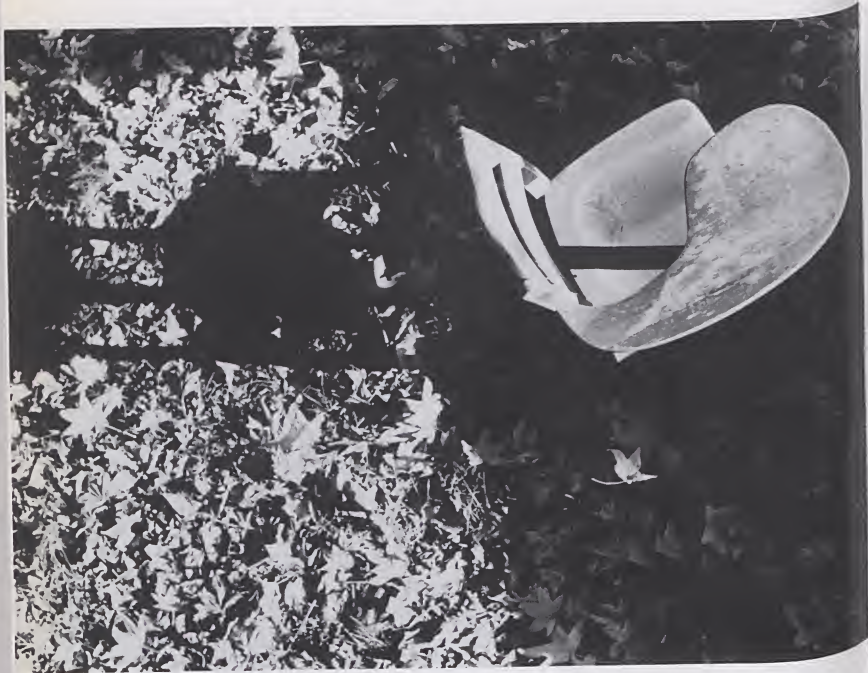
**MODERN  
RELIGION**

*Pete Kazimierzak*



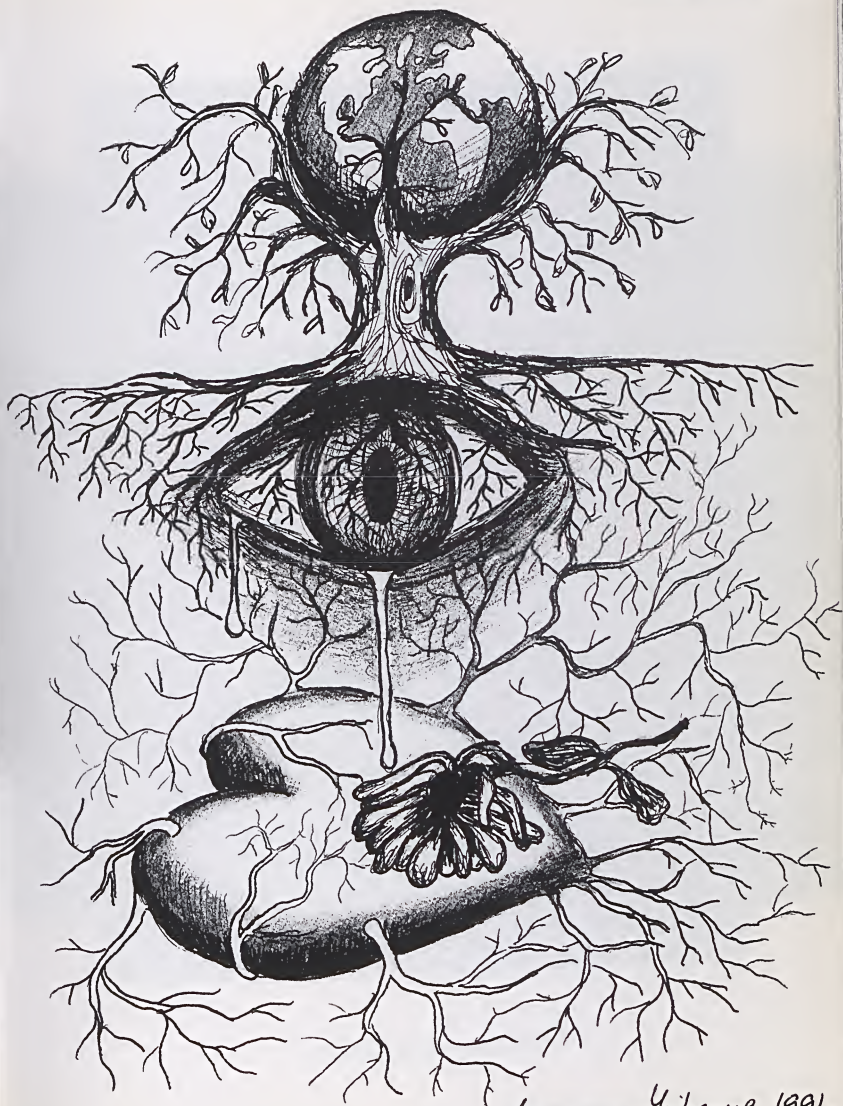


*Carl King*



**FALLING**



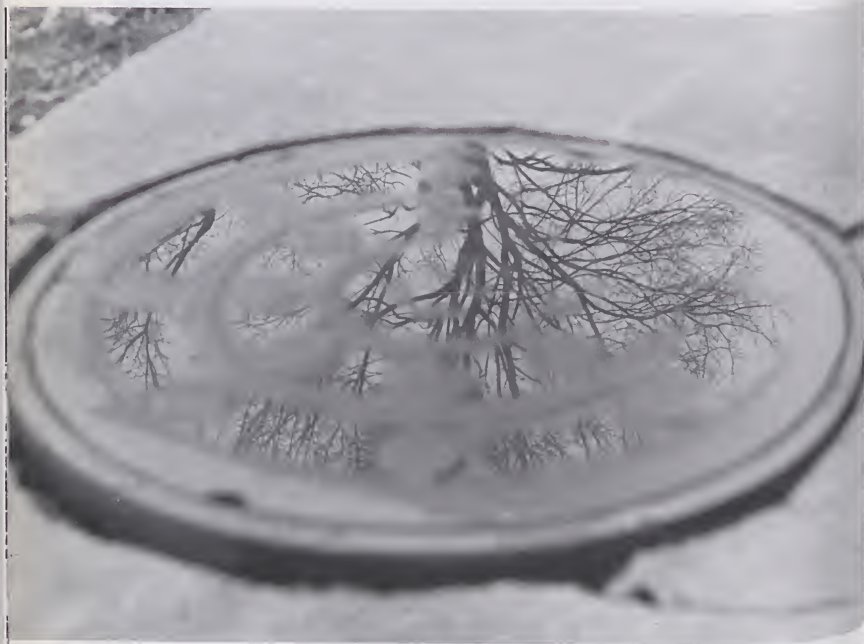








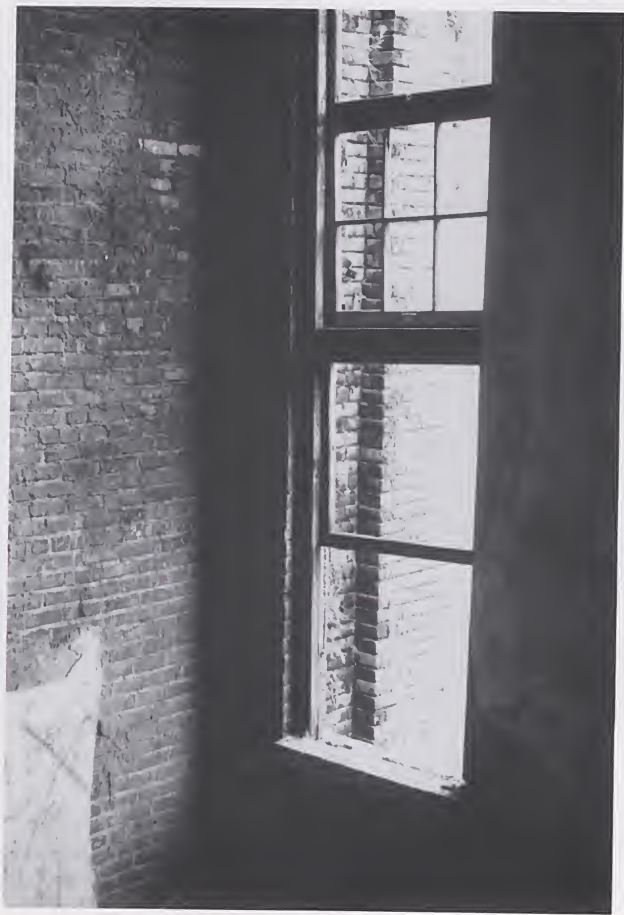
**SALZBURG, AUSTRIA**



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WAITING





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